



Substitute House Bill No. 5799

Public Act No. 07-97

***AN ACT REQUIRING A SERVICE OFFICER WITH PROFICIENCY IN
ENGLISH AND SPANISH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS' AFFAIRS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 27-102*l* of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2007*):

(a) There shall be a Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Veterans' Home shall be within the department and shall be located in Rocky Hill. The department head shall be the Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs, who shall be appointed by the Governor in accordance with the provisions of sections 4-5 to 4-8, inclusive, with the powers and duties prescribed therein.

(b) The commissioner may appoint a unit head to administer a veterans' advocacy and assistance unit for the aid and benefit of veterans, their spouses and eligible dependents and family members. The unit shall have a staff of not less than eight men and women, including six service officers, and clerical personnel. The unit head and the service officers shall be veterans, as defined in section 27-103, or veterans who were awarded the armed forces expeditionary medal for service by the armed forces. At least one of the service officers shall be

Substitute House Bill No. 5799

a woman having a demonstrated interest in the concerns of women veterans, who shall be responsible for addressing those concerns, and, effective upon the next opening of a service officer position occurring on or after July 1, 2007, at least one of the service officers shall be an individual having bilingual proficiency in English and Spanish, within existing authorized positions. Each service officer shall successfully complete a course in veterans' benefits within one year of commencement of employment and shall be assigned to one of the five congressional districts of the state.

(c) In addition to the powers and duties prescribed under section 4-8, the commissioner shall have the following powers and duties:

(1) To prepare studies and collect information concerning facilities and services available to members of the armed forces, veterans, their spouses or eligible dependents, including facilities and services for veterans who may have been exposed to a Vietnam herbicide during their periods of military service;

(2) To conduct interviews in the nursing homes or hospitals throughout the state to determine the number of veterans admitted and ascertaining which benefits such veterans are currently receiving and are entitled to receive;

(3) To cooperate with service agencies and organizations throughout the state in disseminating and furnishing counsel and assistance of benefit to residents of this state who are or have been members of the armed forces, their spouses or eligible dependents, which will indicate the availability of: (A) Educational training and retraining facilities; (B) health, medical, rehabilitation and housing services and facilities; (C) employment and reemployment services; (D) provisions of federal, state and local laws affording financial rights, privileges and benefits; and (E) other matters of similar nature;

Substitute House Bill No. 5799

(4) To assist veterans, their spouses and eligible dependents and family members in the preparation, presentation, proof and establishment of such claims, privileges, rights and other benefits accruing to them under federal, state and local laws;

(5) To cooperate with all national, state and local governmental and private agencies securing or offering services or any benefits to veterans, their spouses or dependents;

(6) To develop and prepare a long-range plan and mission statement for the Veterans' Home and the veterans' advocacy and assistance unit; and

(7) To review all appeals made by veterans, their spouses or eligible dependents or family members and render the final decision thereon regarding the denial of admission to any program or the refusal to render any service or benefit which is administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the discharge or transfer from any such program or any disciplinary action taken while participating in any such program.

(d) The commissioner shall adopt, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, and enforce, such regulations and procedures for the operation, administration and management of the department and all programs and services under the jurisdiction of the department, including, but not limited to, procedures relating to admission and discharge or transfer of veterans in the Veterans' Home, a per diem fee schedule for programs, services and benefits provided by the Veterans' Home, and the participation of eligible family members in programs or services provided by the home.

Approved June 11, 2007